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Rowland Hentoff

Of thugs and liars

What follows is based on more than 30 interviews—to this point—as well as on far too much corollary reading material, and the trading of information, that I later checked out, with several journalists working on parts of this story in other cities.

In the spring of 1973, I first became more than marginally aware of a "political" coven which calls itself the National Caucus of Labor Committees.

A series of beatings were taking place on the streets, in left-wing party offices, and on college campuses. The perpetrators were members of the National Caucus of Labor Committees.

To cite only some of the incidents:

Michael Maggio, a graduate student at Temple University: hospitalized.

Steve Rasmussen, a student at Temple: nose broken.

Two members of the Young Workers Liberation League and one member of the Young Workers Liberation League and one member of the Communist Party, at a meeting of the NAACP in Buffalo: all hospitalized, one with a deep head cut.

From the April 26, 1973, Columbia Daily Spectator, a letter from the Columbia Anti-Imperialist-Movement-Attica-Brigade:

"On Monday night, about 50 goons from the National Caucus of Labor Committees disrupted a forum for New York mayoralty candidates, preventing everyone but their own candidate from speaking, and rushed the stage in an attempt to attack Rasheed Storey, the Communist Party candidate for mayor. This was no spontaneous brawl; the Labor Committee came wearing mouthguards, armed with lead pipes and brass knuckles, and organized into squads with commanders."

From an editorial, Columbia Daily Spectator, April 25, 1973:

"The National Caucus of Labor Committee's (NCLC) outburst at Monday night's mayoral candidates forum was a vicious and unwarranted display of violence. Not being content to defeat their opponents, the group of crazed fanatics stormed the podium and

way."

June 9, 1973: Jesse Smith, a member of the Socialist Workers Party in New York, attacked by members of the NCLC on Broadway in lower Manhattan: hospitalized with a severely fractured arm, along with face and head gashes requiring 11 stitches.

From a Detroit dateline in the May 18, 1973, Militant (an SWP weekly): "On May 5, a group of hoodlums, led by and including recognized members of the NCLC, attacked a session of a regional socialist educational conference at Wayne State University . . .

(Among those attacked was) Jerry Crist, who is partially paralyzed and has to wear a brace and use special crutches to get about. He turned out to be a target of the thugs . . . Doctor Mxolisi Ntlabati of the Center for Black Studies at Wayne State University, and a visiting friend from New York, Professor Nonceba Lubanga, confirmed this account of the attack . . . Dr. Ntlabati said the attacking group had 'police sticks, wooden weapons, an iron bar, and iron hammers.'"

From Vin McLellan's story on the National Caucus of Labor Committees in the January 15, 1974 Boston Phoenix:

"Last spring, the NCLC decided the time had come to take on the Communist Party . . . In Springfield, about 50 of them raided a meeting of the independent group which publishes the labor-oriented New Unity newspaper and physically threatened a 60-year-old Springfield C. P. member until he agreed to say that he renounced the Communist Party and all its affiliates. None of this was done sur-

reptitiously. A press release arrived at the Phoenix the next day proclaiming the great victory in the revolution in Springfield."

In recent weeks, members of the National Caucus of Labor Committees have been focusing on journalists at the Real Paper, a staff-owned alternative weekly in Boston. The NCLC, as part of its mass infestation by the Devils of London, has been accusing the Real Paper of harboring a nest of CIA agents. One of the paper's reporters was roughed up in New York a couple of weeks ago. Several staff members in Boston have been sufficiently scared to unlist their phone numbers. Reporters for the Real Paper had been engaged in investigative reporting on the NCLC and its Maximum Leader, Lyn Marcus (whose real name appears to be Lyndon LaRouche, Jr.). The story was ready to go, but last week the staff of the Real Paper was still debating whether to run it. I asked a friend of mine at the paper if the staff would be reacting this way if it were being harassed by the FBI.

So much, for the time being, concerning one of the ways in which the NCLC communicates its ideas.

Meanwhile, as you may have seen in some of the dailies, the National Caucus of Labor Committees currently claims to be in possession of "proof" of an assassination attempt against its revered leader, the aforementioned Lyndon LaRouche, Jr. (a/k/a Lyn Marcus). Among the forces involved in this alleged plot are the Soviet Secret Police (the KGB), the CIA, and the British intelligence agency, MI5. So far as I know, Princess Grace of Monaco has not yet been implicated.

The NCLC, in view of the gravity of this fell design from the heart of Mordor, is forming an Emergency National Commission of Inquiry "in order to protect internationally significant evidence regarding the security and integrity of the U. S. government and Constitution." This National Commission of Inquiry, according to the NCLC's prodigiously productive public relations cadre, "is being formed

by independent individuals of character and integrity."

Over two and a half weeks ago, I was telephoned by at least four members of the NCLC and was asked to serve on the Commission, presumably because—until this column appears—I am an independent journalist "of character and integrity."

I told the callers that I considered the NCLC to be a bunch of thugs and that I didn't trust them. Because there is, however, sometimes honorable tradition on the left of independent commissions of inquiry, I said I would join this commission if there were someone on it I trusted. They then told me that Rowland Watts of the Workers Defense League was not only a member but was also the commission's most active recruit of other members. (It didn't occur to me to wonder why, if that were true, Rowland, a colleague with whom I have shared many battles, had not called me directly.)

Rowland's name persuaded me to join the commission. A couple of days later, a radical writer, theorist, and activist, whom I respect, called me to warn that the NCLC, once being given permission to use someone's name, has few compunctions about using it for quite other purposes than was originally agreed upon. I called the NCLC and told them clearly and rather loudly, as it turned out, that I was resigning forthwith from the National Commission of Inquiry.

Rowland Watts, who has been in it still on the commission, I found out, but he had informed the NCLC that he would not be available, except in case of emergency, until March. When I told Rowland that he had been described by the NCLC as its most active recruit for the commission, he laughed long and ruefully. It's not so. Why does he stay on? Because Rowland is as close to being a secular saint as anyone I've known except for J. Muste. Like A. J., Rowland would sup with any devil to try to let the light in.

After I had resigned from the commission—and certainly long enough afterwards for my name to be removed from the list—a

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